Key challenges

The rise of digital technologies is having a profound impact on the ways in which information is produced, shared and used. Citizens, and youth in particular, are more connected today than ever, but many lack awareness of the mechanisms that frame their digital presence and engagement with information online and offline.

Whilst online services offer new forms of participation, the digital transformation has also been accompanied by a surge in online hate speech, misinformation and disinformation.

Content personalization and moderation further drive this dangerous trend, with serious repercussions for freedom of expression and democratic development.

In addition, gender-based inequalities and socio-economic disparities underpin the increasing divide in digital access and skills. In a world where new technologies are powerful levers for human development, more needs to be done to enable all countries to harness the potential of the digital transformation, bridge the digital gaps, and ensure citizens’ informed participation in democratic processes.

By empowering citizens and youth with digital, media and information skills, UNESCO contributes to building media and information literate societies.
With your support, UNESCO will...

- Expand its global work on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) to empower citizens, and in particular youth, with skills enabling them to engage critically with online and offline information, and to create and share informed and diverse content.

- Develop and disseminate standard-setting resources on MIL, that support local adaptation and implementation. The focus will be on curricula and policy development, and on the integration of MIL into journalism education, media and youth organizations, as well as corporate training programmes. Resources will also address emerging themes such as artificial intelligence.

- Strengthen partnerships, networks and research on MIL, promoting international efforts to provide global citizenship education. This will include strengthening operations and outreach of the UNESCO MIL Alliance, increasing collaboration with the University Network for Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID), and expanding the UNESCO MIL CLICKS social media learning initiative.

- Organize international youth fora on MIL and lead the annual celebration of Global MIL Week, to promote and raise awareness of MIL education. These activities are designed to give youth a platform for self-empowerment as co-leaders and co-creators of MIL and support good practices in MIL knowledge sharing.

- Contribute to bridging the digital divide, closing the digital gender gap and strengthening large-scale digital literacy. UNESCO will scale up its YouthMobile Initiative, which develops youth coding skills, accelerates local engagement through technological solutions for sustainable development and empowers young women and girls through targeted projects designed to improve their digital skills. YouthMobile will also reach millions of teachers and youth on the African continent through collaborating with key partners on regional initiatives, such as AfricaCodeWeek.

Recent UNESCO achievements include...

- Raising international awareness on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) through global social media campaigns, and by organizing the annual Global MIL Week with over 100 participating countries in 2018 and 2019. In 2020 alone, 73 countries celebrated the Week, and over 320 events were organized across the world.

- Launching MIL CLICKS, a social media initiative that helps people acquire media and information literacy. More than 9,300 young people have already engaged in this peer education project.

- Supporting over 120 training institutions and 300 secondary schools worldwide to pilot the MIL Curriculum, and engaging with 140 youth organizations, of which 80 in Africa, to help them integrate and strengthen MIL in their policies and operations.

- Mobilizing its global multi-stakeholder MIL networks to develop 50 webinars on how to use MIL to address and counter the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching around 530,000 people worldwide. In partnership with IBM and SAP, UNESCO also launched the CodeTheCurve hackathon, a global, gender-inclusive initiative to empower young developers, scientists and entrepreneurs to address COVID-19 through technological innovation and digital solutions. Over 200 project applications were received by teams from countries worldwide.

UNESCO’s YouthMobile Initiative leverages computer science education and the widespread availability of mobile phones to empower its students. Young girls and boys are introduced to coding, and are encouraged to develop, promote and scale up mobile applications to contribute to solving sustainable development challenges.

9,300 +
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MIL CLICKS
to acquire media and information literacy skills.

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More information: Media and Information Literacy, MIL CLICKS Social Media Initiative, UNESCO’s YouthMobile Initiative